

THE INITIATION OF MAIL DISTRIBUTION AND COMMUNICATIONS
IN EASTERN KANSAS: 1828-1870

by

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PREFACE

The initiation of mail distribution and communications in Kansas has been a neglected subject. The original research problem proposed for this thesis was to have included the entire state. It was soon discovered, however, that postal service in the western counties followed a very similar pattern to the later postal development in the counties located in the eastern part of the state. Due to the scope of the research, the work has been limited to the eastern half of the counties and ended with the approximate dates of early railroad construction.

I have attempted to present an over-all picture of the early transportation facilities and their importance to the establishment of the communications system that developed. The materials which have been used are widely scattered. The first research was made from the existing county histories, some of which hardly mention, or fail to mention, the subject of postal service in their respective counties. Other local histories include a fairly complete account of early communications. I have read from many early newspapers, government documents, diaries, clippings and manuscripts in order to establish a pattern of development. Particular attention has been given to accounts written by early pioneers and settlers.

From the study made, I have concluded that there was a general pattern in the establishment of post offices and post routes. The earliest mail services were strictly private enterprises. As transportation facilities improved, the mail service was organized under the supervision of the federal government. Personalities have not been stressed in this paper but it must be remembered that the entire development was made possible by those who found their own means of communications when none previously existed.

It has not been my intention to slight the role of the Government; however, without the strong agitation by the early pioneers and settlers, the Government might have been more lax and disorganized than it actually was.

The research for this thesis has been done almost in its entirety in the library and files of the Kansas State Historical Society in Topeka. I owe a debt of gratitude to the personnel of the Society for their interest and kindness which made my work a pleasure.

I am also grateful to my major professor, Doctor Homer E. Socolofsky, for his patient guidance and advice. The Mueller Scholarship, which was granted for this research, has made my work possible and it has given me an incentive toward research, especially in the field of Kansas history. It has also afforded me the opportunity to become better acquainted with the social history of the early days. I am indeed thankful to Colonel and Mrs. Mueller for their grant and to Doctor Fred L. Parrish, who made the scholarship known to me.

INTRODUCTION

One of the first and most pressing problems confronting the legitimate occupant of pre-territorial Kansas and the early pioneer in the Territory of Kansas was his need for communication with the outside world. Lacking modern facilities of transportation, his only link with his former home was news begged from a passing traveller, a freighter or another homesteader.

Pioneering in Kansas was a solitary life and an especially lonely one for the women who came into the new territory. The settlers longed for news of their families in the East or in Europe. Those left behind worried and wondered about the safe arrival and successful establishment of their friends and relatives who came West. Without near-by post offices the only opportunity to send or receive letters was by the hands of strangers who might chance to pass. Messages were few and far between. "Moccasin mail" was the only way to send a letter from remote places. A traveller might find a letter attached to a stake on a trail with the notice: To the first person going to Missouri, please take.¹

People who settled within a reasonable distance of the early mail distribution points obtained their mail as regularly as it might arrive there and as often as they desired to make a trip for it. News travelled slowly into and out of the new country. Few people bothered to write news to the existing papers in the East when their own post office might be miles away at a Missouri River terminal.

Roads were few and in extremely bad condition. Tall grass hid the existing trails and in most areas there were no beaten paths. In the winter

¹ "Trails Clippings," v. 5, p. 8, a collection in the Kansas State Historical Library.

months, the cold and snow made their primitive travel almost impossible. The warmer months brought rain and muddy, impassable trails. Swollen streams, without bridges, could not be safely crossed.

The population was sparsely distributed. Less than a thousand troops, missionaries, and Government agents and their families lived among the Indians of pre-territorial days. In 1855, the entire population of Kansas did not exceed 8,500 persons. In 1860, the reported number of inhabitants was 107,300.

Generally speaking, throughout the eastern one-half of Kansas, communications developed along a similar pattern from one area to another. Meager settlements grew up around trading posts, military posts, post roads, creek, river and trail crossings. The pioneer villages which made up the heart of frontier life soon had the necessary blacksmith shop, a general store and a post office.

Often, the nearest trading point, steamboat landing or railroad depot was many miles away. A community would then band together to send after their mail to the most convenient point. Private carrier and express service grew rapidly. As more and more towns came into being, mail routes were established, first as private enterprises, and later under Government supervision. Then the people were no longer dependent upon the chance strangers who might carry a letter, an old newspaper, or bring verbal news from "back East."

With only a sprinkling of settlers, getting messages into and out of Kansas was a serious problem. To walk the distance to and from the nearest distribution point was a lonely, hazardous and time-consuming chore. Any settler going to buy supplies was automatically charged with bringing back the mail for his entire settlement; however, his homesteading completely

filled his daylight hours and eventually the group would have to take turns or hire someone to make regular trips for mail.

The carrier handed out the letters on his return trip as he passed by the homesteads. The main local distribution point, especially after mail routes were established, was the country store where the post offices were usually located. When the mail was expected, a crowd always gathered there. Mail day was an important one and often set aside for visiting and purchasing supplies. Each person listened attentively for his name to be called out when the mail came. Letters from "back home" were generously shared with those who felt the keen disappointment in receiving no mail. In communities where there was no general store, private homes served as post offices.

The lost towns of Kansas are too numerous to be discussed at length here. Many towns were abandoned because of poor locations, fires, storms, or financial problems. Post offices came and went with these ghost towns. Names were often changed for one reason or another and locations changed as frequently as did the names. Money was scarce and many communities could not support a post office, however badly it was needed.

Agitation for mail service and post offices began early. The cause was taken up by prominent people and the existing newspapers. Service was poor or non-existent, some postmasters served without pay and many were not legally appointed. The salaries, if any, were small and varied from office to office. Some postmasters felt that collecting their meager pay from the Government was hardly worth the effort. Others, some duly appointed and many who were not, retained their postmasterships only as a public service. The Post Office Department, so far removed from the new territory, could not keep pace with the many post offices and mail routes which were established for their own convenience by private citizens without proper authority.

The private mail carriers, as well as many of the postmasters, conscientiously undertook their difficult tasks as an accommodation to their neighbors. Until the Government systematically organized the mail service, these private carriers performed an invaluable service to their communities. They not only brought in the written mail from the mail distribution points, but they also carried news from settlement to settlement. Every small contact with the outside world in the earliest days was heartily welcomed.

In the beginning the Government mail system was poor and disorganized. "Mail routes were established in advance of post offices and contracts were awarded and paid for by an indulgent government when there was no occasion for any service and when, in fact, no service had been performed."² Many settlers felt that their private carriers rendered a much better and a more practical service.

The Governor of Kansas Territory, John W. Geary, wrote the following letter to the Secretary of State in Washington on September 22, 1856, in which he complained of the existing mail service:³

The postal arrangements of the Territory are lamentably inefficient. Complaints on this subject are loud and universal, and my own experience has convinced me that these are not without sufficient cause. Every package addressed to me through the mail is broken and inspected before it reaches my hands. It is entirely unsafe to send information through the post office, and more especially so to use that medium to forward anything of pecuniary value. Postmasters are either ignorant of their duty and obligations, or, being acquainted with these, act in violation of both. Indeed, I have been credibly informed that in some places, persons not connected with the offices are permitted to enter and overhaul the mails previous to their distribution. This is a serious evil, upon which some prompt action is needed.

² George A. Root, "Ferries in Kansas," Kansas Historical Quarterly, May, 1933, v. 2, p. 4.

³ Kansas Historical Collections, v. 4, p. 554.

Another aired his complaint in a letter written from Lecompton on August 27, 1856:⁴

I have come to the conclusion that it is almost useless to write, as I feel pretty well satisfied that my letters never get out of the Territory, no, nor this county, but are stopped in Lawrence.

Carrying mail was one of the most important functions of the stage lines. Letters were carried in leather pouches and printed matter in canvas sacks. Pouches were often leaky and carelessly handled. Service was irregular and mail was received in poor condition. There was a "through" pouch and a "way" pouch. Mails were delayed by break-downs, storms, high waters, inclement weather and by the irresponsibility of some of the carriers.

After 1855, post offices were rapidly established. The touch of local government, following territorial status assumed in 1854, began to invite immigration at once, and of course, they brought the post offices with them.

The first post office in Kansas was established at present Fort Leavenworth in 1828, under the name of Cantonement Leavenworth. Fort Scott, in Bourbon county, became the second post office in 1843.

In 1855, the following post offices were established:⁵

Allen	Lyon County	
Atchison	Atchison	
Burlingame	Osage	est. as Council City
Centerville	Linn	
Centropolis	Franklin	est. as St. Bernard
Clifton	Douglas	est. as Bloomington
Council Grove	Morris	
Doniphan	Doniphan	
Easton	Leavenworth	

⁴ Kansas Historical Quarterly, Feb., 1934, p. 61.

⁵ "Postal Service Clippings," v. 1, pp. 159-160, a file in the Kansas State Historical Library.

Edgerton	Johnson County	
Fort Riley	Geary	
Highland	Doniphan	
Iowa Point	Doniphan	
Kickapoo City	Leavenworth	
Lane	Allen	est. as Shermansville
Lawrence	Douglas	
Leavenworth	Leavenworth	est. as Leavenworth City
Lecompton	Douglas	
Locust Grove	Atchison	est. as Mt. Pleasant
Mound City	Linn	est. as Sugar Mound
Osawatomie	Miami	
Ozawie	Jefferson	(a famous stage relay station between Atchison and Topeka)
Palermo	Doniphan	
Peoria Village	Miami	now Paola
Pardee	Atchison	est. as Ocena
St. Marys	Pottawatomie	est. as St. Marys Mission
Tecumseh	Shawnee	
Topeka	Shawnee	
Valley Falls	Jefferson	est. as Grasshopper Falls
Wabaunsee	Wabaunsee	
Wathena	Doniphan	
White Cloud	Doniphan	
Willow Springs	Douglas	est. as Davis
Wyandotte	Wyandotte	

Adhesive post stamps were adopted in the United States in 1847 for prepayment of postage on mailing matter. Previously, the collection of postal revenues was a haphazard matter, with many loopholes left for the issuing office. Before stamps were issued, when a letter was accepted for mailing, the postmaster marked it as having been paid and wrote the receipt on the envelope in ink or used a hand stamp to indicate payment. Such letters were usually marked with the place and date of mailing.

Some postmasters used special stamps or devices to show the proper amount of postage had been paid. These stamps of local origin were called "Postmaster Provisionals."⁶ The cost of mailing a letter in the early days varied somewhere between five cents and a dollar. The amount was determined

⁶ *Ibid.*, v. 2, p. 34.

by the weight and the distance it had to go. Even after stamps were adopted, these various methods of making payment of postage continued to be legal; however, on January 1, 1856, the use of stamps affixed to letters became obligatory.

In the early days letters were simply folded with writing inside and were addressed on the back. Envelopes were not used. Writing materials were not only scarce but expensive. Many of the first settlers did not have enough money for the required postage.

The Post Office Department in Washington created star routes wherever there was an inland post office that needed mail brought in from the nearest central post office or railroad depot. The carriers on such a route also delivered mail for a fee to anyone who would put up a box on his route. The star routes served hundreds of rural patrons and numerous Kansas communities until rural free delivery was established.

By the time the railroads crossed Kansas, the Government became more willing to establish post offices, provided the postmaster or his deputy could carry the mail for three months without cost from some point to which service had already been established. Thereafter, the post office had to be self-supporting. If the revenues were not sufficient, the settlers had to make up the difference or they lost their post office.

Settlement in the western counties of Kansas occurred in the 1870's and 1880's. The railroads had a great influence on their mail service. For example, in Ness county, "from almost the beginning there was an adequate communication system via the United States Mail, supplemented by a great deal of volunteer carriage and neighborly cooperation."⁷

⁷ Minnie D. Millbrook, Ness, Western County, Kansas, p. 257.

In the eastern half of Kansas, including all of the counties east of a line drawn south from the western boundaries of Republic to Sumner counties, early mail service developed in a generally uniform pattern. There were radiating routes from main distribution points such as Fort Leavenworth, Kansas City and St. Joseph, Missouri, Atchison, Fort Scott, Council Grove and Fort Riley. The Santa Fe Trail and the fort to fort roads provided early communications and mail service. Early settlements and post offices were located along or near these routes. Until the railroads crossed Kansas, which brought dependable mail service, and the later establishment of rural free delivery by the Post Office Department, the settlers were dependent upon the overland routes for mail.

The first communication route across Kansas was the Santa Fe Trail, followed by the Fort Leavenworth to Fort Scott Military Road in 1843. In 1854, the military road from Fort Leavenworth to Fort Riley was opened. Mail went out across the northern tier of Kansas counties from such points as Leavenworth, Atchison and St. Joseph, Missouri. Contacts with Missouri points were important to early mail distribution in territorial Kansas.

Fort Leavenworth, established in 1827, was the steamboat landing from which all military supplies started across the great plains. It was also an outfitting point and post office for the scattered Government agents, soldiers and missionaries. To the south ran the military road across the Kansas River at Grinter's Ferry to Fort Scott, and thence to Forts Gibson and Smith. To the west and southwest ran the military road crossing the Kansas River at Pappan's ferry, near present Topeka; thence to Council Grove, intersecting the Santa Fe Trail from Independence a few miles east of that point; thence southwesterly, striking the Arkansas River at Big Bend, following it up to the Cimarron Crossing, about 25 miles above present Dodge City

and on to Santa Fe. The fort to fort trails were not only used for government troops and supplies and for private transportation but also for carrying both military and private mail.

The Government built a post road from St. Louis to Westport, Missouri, in 1839, and mail was received twice a week by stage. St. Louis had a population of 74,439 in 1850. The first railroad west of the Mississippi River, the Pacific Railroad, was built from St. Louis to Kansas City during the years 1851 to 1856, linking the East with the West. Another important link with the outside world was the construction of the Hannibal and St. Joseph Railroad during the years 1851 and 1859.

Missouri River steamboating reached its height during the decade before the Civil War. Packet lines were established from St. Louis to Miami, Kansas City, St. Joseph and Omaha, and even as far as Sioux City. They carried the United States mail and the express freight. The semi-weekly or daily arrival of the regular packet was looked forward to with eagerness. About 35 steamboats plied the Kansas River between 1854 and 1866. In 1864, the state legislature declared the Kansas River unnavigable and authorized the construction of dams and bridges. High waters washed out the bridges in 1866, but the days of profitable steamboating were ended. In all, the river traffic made little impression on the establishment of internal postal service in Kansas.

The Overland Stage and Mail was established from Independence, Missouri, to Santa Fe in 1849. Council Grove was one of the most important stations on that route. The first overland mail route between Independence and Salt Lake City was established in 1850. There was to be a monthly service. Later the line was extended into California.

After the establishment of Forts Laramie and Kearney, it became necessary for the Government to contract for the hauling of freight to those places. The route to Fort Kearney led from Fort Leavenworth to Kennekuk, in the northwest corner of Atchison county, to Seneca, to the Big Blue River and up the Big Blue and the Little Blue to the Platte River.

In the winter of 1858 and 1859, a daily stage line was established between the city of Leavenworth and Denver. The route ran from Leavenworth to Indianola, a station near the Kansas River about three miles northwest of Topeka, and on up the Smoky Hill River to the Denver station. The line was controlled by the firm of Russell, Majors and Waddell, later to be consolidated with the Holladay line from St. Joseph to Salt Lake City. Holladay became the great overland stage man and bought most of the lines then in existence for consolidation into a huge network later absorbed by Wells Fargo for service throughout the West.

As California and the West grew, the demand for quicker communication between east and west developed. This finally resulted in the start of the Pony Express, a relay mail service from St. Joseph, Missouri, to Sacramento, California. The Pony Express, begun on April 3, 1860, was in existence about 18 months when it was superseded by the telegraph. The Express served points in northeastern Kansas such as Elwood, Seneca and Hollenberg. In 1859, the telegraph was extended from St. Louis to Leavenworth and from Leavenworth to Fort Scott in 1863.

The railroads meant the beginning of the end to much of the initial mail service. They brought faster, more extensive and safer mail delivery. Mail went westward on the construction trains before regular services were established. Regular railway mail service came for many points when the Kansas Pacific Railroad reached Salina in 1867; the Junction City and Ft.

Kearney Railroad reached Clay Center in 1868; the Missouri River and Ft. Scott and Gulf Railroad reached Fort Scott in 1869; the Leavenworth, Lawrence and Galveston Railroad reached Coffeyville in 1871; and the Atchison, Topeka and Santa Fe Railroad reached Newton in 1871, and was extended to Wichita the following year.

OVER THE SANTA FE TRAIL

Freighting over the Santa Fe Trail from Independence, Missouri, across Kansas to Santa Fe opened up the earliest regular means of communication between east and west. In order for the early settlers to receive mail they had to find someone making the trip down the Trail or back and then rely on his courtesy and memory. Along the route an empty cabin or a cache in a tree provided an improvised post office where letters were left. One such cache was the famous Post Office Oak at Council Grove, which according to tradition, served the incoming and outgoing trains over the Trail between 1824 and 1847.

Government mail service was inaugurated over the Trail in 1849 which crossed Wyandotte, Douglas, Osage, Wabaunsee, Lyon and Morris counties. Additional counties, namely Chase, Franklin, Marion, Butler and Sedgwick, were also dependent upon Council Grove and the Trail for their early mail service.

Independence, Missouri, founded in 1827, was the great starting depot on the Santa Fe Trail from that date. Near-by Westport Landing, settled in 1831, later merged into the town of Kansas City. The Kansas City population in 1849 was around 500 people; in 1854, 2,000; and in 1860, 4,400. Council Grove, in Morris county, was the most important out-station on the Trail.

Carrying the mail to Santa Fe was always a long, tedious journey.

The outfit, after Government service was begun, consisted of a conductor, two mail boys, four or six mules, with two extras, and provisions. Corn for the mules and blankets and food for the men took up most of the space in the wagon. They hauled two mail sacks. One was a "through sack" which was not opened until it reached Santa Fe. The second bag contained mail for the stations in between.

Handling of the mail was quite informal at the between stations. When the wagon pulled into town and the "Mail!" cry was heard, everyone gathered in a hotel, store or some central place. The mail sack was opened and dumped on the floor. The people would look through the letters and take out any that belonged to them. Sometimes a few letters slipped through a crack in the floor and were lost. What mail was left would be sacked up and taken on to the next town. When the mail wagon met another going in the opposite direction they always camped together and exchanged news. The mail wagon to Santa Fe took 21 days and if they kept to schedule the outfit rested for a week.⁸

Wyandotte County. According to the records at the National Archives in Washington, the first Kansas post office outside a military reservation was located at Grinter's ferry landing at a site on the Kansas River near what is now Muncie, in Wyandotte county. The post office was known as the Delaware station. It was on the star route between Westport and St. Joseph, Missouri. The ferry service, the first in Kansas, was opened in 1831.⁹ The post office was established there on September 10, 1850. Five years later

⁸ G. W. Coffin, The Story of the Santa Fe Trail, quoted in the Manhattan Mercury, n. d.

⁹ Kansas City Kansas, Nov. 5, 1953.

a post office was established at Wyandotte.

The first post office in Kansas City, Kansas, was opened in the spring of 1857 in the old courthouse. The mail was brought from Kansas City, Missouri, on horseback. "William Chick of the banking firm of Northrup and Chick, maintained the service in that city for the first year at his own expense. The Wyandottes were great readers, as a rule, and it was as much to accommodate them, as for any other reason, that the post office in Kansas City was established."¹⁰

Douglas County. Before the opening of the United States post office, citizens of Lawrence, in Douglas county, realizing their need for a central distribution point for mail, set up their own post office. They appointed a citizen to discharge the duties of postmaster. Prior to this, letters mailed to individuals at Lawrence had been stopped at Kansas City or Westport. Mail was brought almost daily to Lawrence by private individuals who chanced to be travelling between the several points.¹¹

In 1854, a petition for a tri-weekly mail was forwarded to the postal officials in Washington.¹² The Lawrence post office was granted in 1855. It became one of the main distributing offices for settlements located in Lyon, Butler and near-by counties. In 1855, post offices were also established at Clifton, formerly Bloomington, at Leecompton and at Willow Springs under the name of Davis.

On July 9, 1855, the Kansas Free State of Lawrence published a list of letters remaining in the Lawrence post office on July 1 of that year. In

¹⁰ Wyandotte County and Kansas City, Kansas, Historical and Biographical, p. 362.

¹¹ "Postal Service Clippings," v. 2, p. 64.

¹² Lawrence—Past, Present and Future, p. 124.

the same issue, the Post Office Department published a list of proposed mail routes for the Kansas-Nebraska Territory.

Kanwaka, six miles west of Lawrence, began as a community in 1854. Mail was brought from Lawrence daily all during the Civil War by the Leavenworth to Topeka stage to the Kanwaka post office.¹³

Franklin County. Franklin county, organized in 1855, was not on the regular Santa Fe route, but the early settlers depended upon Westport for their mail. In 1854, Joseph Bernard opened a store at Centropolis Village. The post office was established as St. Bernard in 1855, but the name was changed to Centropolis at a later date.¹⁴ Mail was brought out from Kansas City until about 1875 or later.

A post office was established at Lane in a cabin in 1856. It was first called Shermansville and was a pro-slavery settlement. Due to the unsettled conditions, it was deemed unsafe to go to the post office without company or being well-armed with a six-shooter or a large bowie knife.¹⁵

There was a post office at Peoria in 1857. Near-by Ottawa did not have an official post office until 1864.

Osage County. The Santa Fe Trail also furnished the first communication for the people of Osage county. In 1854, there was a mail stage once a month each way which carried 20 persons, one ton of mail and provisions.¹⁶

¹³ Mrs. Guy Bigsby, Pioneer History of Kanwaka Township, Douglas County.

¹⁴ "Franklin County Clippings," p. 90, a file in the Kansas State Historical Library.

¹⁵ "Hamway's Scrapbook of Franklin County," pp. 25-26, in the Kansas State Historical Library.

¹⁶ "Osage County Clippings," p. 41, a file in the Kansas State Historical Library.

The first house erected for a mail station on the Trail at the present site of Burlingame was built long before the town came into existence. The Burlingame post office was established in 1855, under the name of Council City. The name was changed to Burlingame in 1857.¹⁷ Mail service slowly improved. The Kansas Herald of Freedom, Lawrence, reported on February 16, 1856, that mail was then carried weekly from Westport to Council Grove via Council City. During the same year it was reported that Osage City, although receiving a weekly mail, discovered their mail was being "overhauled" at Westport.¹⁸

In 1856 a bridge was built over 110 Mile Creek and a post office was established at that Santa Fe Crossing. The Lyndon and Carbondale post offices were established in 1869, and a new mail route from Baldwin City, in Douglas county, to Burlingame was started.¹⁹

Lyon County. An early post office in Lyon county, formerly Madison county, was granted at Allen. It was established in 1854 at the crossing of 142 Creek on the Trail, three and one-half miles northeast of the present town. Elmedaro, now defunct, was the county seat of old Madison county. It was located in 1855 at a point ten miles south and seven miles east of Emporia on the south side of Little Eagle Creek. There was a post office there.

Other post offices established, but later abolished when Emporia was founded, were Fremont, Forest Hill and Columbia. The Orleans post office, west of Americus, was moved to Americus when that post office was established

¹⁷ "Diary of James R. Stewart," Kansas Historical Quarterly, Feb., 1949, p. 172.

¹⁸ "Osage County Clippings," p. 53, a file in the Kansas State Historical Library.

¹⁹ Ibid., p. 6.

in 1858. Agnes City had a post office in 1857 or 1858 on the Santa Fe Trail. A place called Trail was also an early post office.

Columbia, three miles southeast of Emporia on the Cottonwood River, was supposed to receive mail weekly in 1857. In the beginning, mail for this section was left at the post office on the Santa Fe Trail on 142 Creek at the home of Charles Withington, the postmaster for the first county post office. Mail for this community was also deposited for a time in a hollow tree located on the bank of the Neosho River. Soon the post office was moved from Columbia to Emporia. All mail matter for that post office was addressed to Box 500, Lawrence, the "Emporia Box." It was brought sometimes by immigrants or others who might be passing through the country. Sometimes a team was hired to go to Lawrence to bring the mail. An occasional horseback mail was carried from Fort Scott to Council Grove, by way of Emporia. Late in 1857, a mail route was established between Emporia and Lawrence. The hack line made round trips weekly. The passenger fare was \$15. The mail contract was given to the owner of the hack line to bring the mail once a week. It required two days to cover the distance of 75 miles.²⁰ Mail service continued in this manner until the Atchison, Topeka and Santa Fe Railroad reached Emporia in 1870.

Morris County. Council Grove was the only town in Morris county until 1860. The first white settler in Council Grove was a trader who came in 1847, two years before the Government established the mail route to New Mexico. Until 1855, when the post office was established, there was only a mission and the mail and grain buildings there. The people had been getting their mail at the old mail station because there was no building for a post

²⁰ Laura M. French, History of Emporia and Lyon County, pp. 9-10.

office. The postmaster took the sack and distributed the mail on the street or would go into a store where he emptied the contents on the floor to give everyone a chance to get his own mail. The postmaster's salary was then \$2 a year, but he never collected it.²¹

Many new people arrived in Council Grove between 1855 and 1860. The town became a central distribution point for mail and an important trading center for a wide surrounding area. The Missouri, Kansas and Texas Railroad reached Council Grove in 1869, which brought major changes in mail distribution.

Chase County. Early settlements in Chase county were along the main trail between Emporia and Wichita. President Buchanan appointed a postmaster at the only post office in Chase county at the time, Cottonwood Falls.²² A little later there was a steady mail route from Cottonwood Falls to Marion Centre, in Marion county. There was a post office on Middle Creek in 1868. It was kept in a private residence where the mail was stored in a wash stand drawer.

The Cedar Point post office was established in 1862. The Elk post office was not established until 1874. Previously, the mail was kept in a tub further down on Middle Creek. The name Elk was not chosen because there were elk or deer there at the time but because the postmaster was not furnished with a Government stamp with which to stamp the mail going through that post office. The postmaster was required to write the name of the post office on the letters so he chose a short and appropriate one. He kept the mail in a box partitioned into small sections.²³

²¹ Lalla M. Birgham, The Story of Council Grove on the Santa Fe Trail, p. 15.

²² "Chase County Historical Sketches," v. 1, p. 144, a collection in the Kansas State Historical Library.

²³ Ibid., p. 169.

Marion County. As late as 1872, there were only twelve post offices listed in Marion county. In the early days, Indian troubles and the fact that there were no roads, only short-cut trails, caused settlement to be slow. In 1860, there was little need or desire for a post office. Mail was distributed at Cottonwood Falls, in Chase county. Freight came from Junction City and Topeka.

The first post offices were at Moore's Ranch and Lost Springs in 1861. Trading posts were located at both places in 1859. In 1862, a post office was established at Marion Centre on the mail route from Cottonwood Falls. From November 7, 1862, through June 30, 1863, the postmaster at Marion Centre earned \$2.77. Fourth class offices paid no salary and the postmaster served for a commission on the sale of stamps. In 1863, the three-cent post was set. Previously, the post charge had been according to distance.

Mail supposedly weekly, was delivered sometimes once in two weeks, sometimes only once in four weeks, depending upon the roads, the weather and the disposition of the carrier. By 1870, there were mail routes into Marion county from Cottonwood Falls, Junction City, Council Grove and Emporia.²⁴

Butler County. The first Butler county post offices were established at Chelsea in 1858 and at El Dorado in 1860. Near Chelsea, in 1858, the most accessible post office was Lawrence. A tri-weekly hack was running from Lawrence to Emporia. Chelsea people cooperated with those in Emporia and rented a post office box at Lawrence to which their mail was addressed. Whoever went to Emporia brought down the mail for Chelsea which was

²⁴ Marion Record, April 28, 1938.

distributed by the merchants. Ox teams were used for freighting and for other chores.²⁵

In Hickory township the mail was carried from El Dorado by a boy riding a bareback pony once each week. About 1871, he was paid \$3 a trip.²⁶ In Milton township, in 1869 and 1870, Towanda was the nearest post office. The nearest railroad was Emporia, a distance of 70 miles. The Towanda post office also sent mail to Plum Grove.

Stage coaches furnished the first public transportation for hire. The first stage coaches to run on a regular schedule came into Butler county in 1870. They carried passengers, mail and light express. One line operated from Emporia to Wichita via El Dorado. Another stage operated from Humboldt, in Allen county, followed in a general way the old Osage Trail, and passed through El Dorado to Wichita. When the Santa Fe Railroad was completed to Newton in 1871, a stage line was run from Newton to El Dorado and the Emporia line became less popular.

In Clifford township the first settlers received their scanty mail from Emporia, Cottonwood Falls or Towanda. The latter was on the Butler, Missouri, route.

The stage lines used old Concord coaches, passengers inside, baggage strapped onto the rear, driver on top and the mail sack in the boot at his feet. Two lines of these coaches passed through Butler county, commencing in 1870, and continuing in some form until 1871, when the railroad reached Newton. One line of stages operated between Emporia and Wichita, making the daily trip of 110 miles. Stage stations in Butler county were located about ten miles apart at Sycamore Springs, Chelsea, El Dorado, Towanda and

²⁵ Jessie P. Stratford, Butler County's Eighty Years, 1855-1935, p. 25. The "Emporia Box" at Lawrence is also numbered 400, see f.n. 20.

²⁶ Ibid., p. 37.

Payne's Ranch on Dry Creek.²⁷

Wabaunsee County. Southeast Wabaunsee county was also supplied with mail by the Santa Fe Trail. Harveyville received its first mail by coaches that ran over the old Trail. Council City, now Burlingame, was the first post office for the settlement called Friend's Mission. As the Trail ran through Wilmington and a branch from Leavenworth united with the main trail at Wilmington, a post office was established there in January, 1858. A mail route from Burlingame to Alma was not established until the fall of 1869.²⁸

A pony rider brought the mail to the Harveyville post office, going up one day and returning the next. Upon his arrival at the Harvey cabin he would empty his saddle bags in the middle of the floor and wait for the country folk to pick out their own letters. Whatever mail was left on the floor was gathered up and tucked into pigeonholes in an old hand-made bureau.²⁹ This post office was located at the two-story log cabin a few miles from Harveyville on Dragon Creek. Harveyville also had a weekly mail brought from Tecumseh, in Shawnee county, by horseback.

The Alma post office, the office for the whole surrounding territory, was located near what was called "Devil's Lookout" in Farmer township in 1867.³⁰ Leavenworth was the nearest post office and trading center for the town of Wabaunsee and the northern part of the county in the early days. Wabaunsee, located near the Kansas River, received a post office in 1855.

²⁷ Ibid., p. 140.

²⁸ "Wabaunsee County Clippings," v. 1, p. 43, a file in the Kansas State Historical Library.

²⁹ Ibid., v. 2, p. 131.

³⁰ Ibid., p. 222.

DOWN THE FORT LEAVENWORTH-FORT SCOTT MILITARY ROAD

Fort Leavenworth was established as headquarters of the Department of Missouri, on June 21, 1827. Not until May 29, 1828, was a post office established at the Fort. Prior to that date, mail service depended upon a 26-mile horseback ride over a difficult trail to Liberty, Missouri, or upon travel down the Missouri River by means of a chance steamboat or a slow-moving keelboat to the same place.

Fort Leavenworth was the nearest post office and trading post for the far-flung residents all over the eastern part of pre-territorial Kansas. Weston, Missouri, just above the Fort, was a thriving town of 3,775 people in 1849, while Westport Landing, part of present Kansas City, had only 500 persons at the same date. A steamboat regularly crossed the Missouri River to Weston, where many pioneers outfitted before crossing into Indian country.

The Fort Leavenworth to Fort Scott Military Road was completed in 1843. It passed through present Johnson, Miami, Linn and Bourbon counties, providing a means of communication between the points concerned. Fort Scott became the main mail distribution point for Crawford, Cherokee, Allen, Woodson, Neosho, Labette and Montgomery counties, especially after the development of Kansas Territory. Crossing the military road, was a stage line from Butler, Missouri, which ran west into Anderson, Coffey and Greenwood counties.

Johnson County. The military road, running south through Johnson county, crossed the Santa Fe Trail which also provided communication access for the early settlers. Johnson county, organized in 1855, had white occupants at several early missionary stations. The Shawnee Methodist Mission was established in 1830. Other agencies for the Shawnees were the first

Baptist Mission in 1831, and the first Quaker Mission, near Merriam, which was established in 1834.

Edgerton was granted a post office in 1855, and the Olathe post office was established in 1857. During the winter of 1859, the people of Olathe were planning for better and more numerous mail facilities. Olathe was the county seat but it only had one mail a week from the East. This was provided by the overland stage from Westport, Missouri, to Santa Fe. Provision was made for a postmaster but the office did not provide sufficient postal revenue to tempt even a man out of work to act in that position.³¹

In 1860, Olathe had a population of 520 people. The county population was listed as 4,364. During the same year, the first stage coach on a tri-weekly mail line through Olathe was established. It ran from Kansas City, Missouri, to the Sac and Fox Agency. The territorial legislature passed an act during the 1858-59 session to open a state road from Leavenworth via Olathe, Spring Hill, Paola and Mound City to Fort Scott.³²

In the fall of 1857, Washington granted a post office at Spring Hill and a postmaster was duly appointed. Postal receipts, which were supposed to pay for carrying the mail, were next to nothing at all, but the carrying had to be done just the same. Under these circumstances it was undertaken as a labor of love. During the winter of 1857 and 1858, mail was actually carried on foot to Olathe and back once a week. It was a dreary task, travelling over the bleak prairie, sometimes through snow. The carriers went two at a time for safety. There were no beaten roads to guide them. In 1858, the mail route was changed and mail came through the distribution

³¹ Ed Blair, History of Johnson County, Kansas, p. 92.

³² Ibid., p. 137.

office at Westport. A resident of Spring Hill contracted to carry the mail weekly.³³

The old hotel at Spring Hill was built in 1857. A four-horse stage line ran by its door. The drivers changed horses there as they did at other stage barns which were located about every ten miles along the route. Pat Murphy and Jaral L. Sanderson came to Johnson county with the idea of carrying mail and operating stage lines. Sanderson had first established a stage line from Sedalia to Warrensburg, Missouri. Later, in 1863 and 1864, he ran a line from Kansas City, Missouri, to Fort Scott, making a contract to carry mail for four years at one percent per year. He also operated a line from Kansas City to Santa Fe. The daily mail and express was continued until the Missouri River, Fort Scott and Gulf Railroad was built in 1869-1870. The first station was at Gum Springs, then Beattie Mahaffies', northeast of Olathe, Squiresville, Spring Hill, Paola, Twin Springs, north of Mound City, Ft. Lincoln and Fort Scott. During the Civil War a telegraph line was established along the route.³⁴

Miami County. Both settlers and missionaries came into Miami county at an early date. The first post office in the county was established at Osawatomie in December, 1855. The main road from Fort Leavenworth and Westport Landing ran south through the county. The only mail service was by wagon train or stage coach. Mail was received and dispatched on the average of once a week. Early reports show that letters and the few newspapers and magazines were a source of much enjoyment.³⁵

³³ Ibid., p. 135.

³⁴ Ibid., pp. 127-8.

³⁵ "Miami County Pamphlets," p. 9, a collection in the Kansas State Historical Library.

Other early post offices were established at Paola, Stanton, Marysville, Miami Mission, Trenton, and Rockville (Rockwell). The Paola office was originally granted under the name of Peoria Village in 1855.

In the early days, mail was carried on horseback between Osawatomie and Neodesha, in Wilson county. The carrier received \$100 per quarter, making a weekly round trip which took him three days in the summer and four days during the winter months.³⁶

Linn County. In 1834, Jean Baptiste began doing business in Linn county where Trading Post is located. Trading Post, on the military road, had a log fort which accommodated a company of men in 1842. The road ran south, crossing Mine Creek to an Indian agency located on the site of Fort Scott. From Fort Scott the military road ran to Fort Smith in Arkansas and to Fort Gibson in Indian Territory.

Centerville had a Catholic mission established there in 1838. There was also a post office of that name in the territorial days. The official post office was granted in 1855, but the mission was moved to St. Marys, in Pottawatomie county.³⁷

The first post office in the county was established at Mound City under the name of Sugar Mound in 1855. The postmaster also maintained a small stock of groceries. His home and place of business was destroyed by raiders in 1856.

By 1857, a regular stage line was maintained between Fort Leavenworth and Fort Smith. Moneta at this time was a nucleus of a frontier town with a post office, blacksmith shop, grocery and dry goods store. A petition was

³⁶ Ibid., p. 41.

³⁷ William A. Mitchell, Linn County, Kansas: A History, p. 34.

granted for a post office to be named Blooming Grove during the same year.

Linn county was 75 miles by stage or wagon from the nearest steamboat landing and the same distance or more from the nearest railway station as late as 1865. The daily stage left the Chicago Tribune, the St. Louis Democrat, the Cincinnati Gazette and the New York Tribune. These papers were no longer new when they reached the outlying communities, but their contents were devoured and discussed with an extra zest arising out of the fact that news only a few days old was "fresh news."³⁸ Any bit of information from the East was thoroughly appreciated.

The Ridge post office was established in 1865. President Lincoln commissioned the postmaster who kept the office in his home. The postmaster's wife served dinner to the stage drivers and the passengers who stopped on both the north and south trips.³⁹ The mail bags were opened and the mail worked at each stop.

Bourbon County. In 1837, the military road from Fort Leavenworth south to Fort Scott was begun, although Fort Scott was not established on the Marmaton River until 1842. During the following year, the military road was completed. The pike or grade, like a railroad grade, was constructed across all river and creek bottoms to facilitate transportation.

Means for mail facilities and communication with the outside world were decidedly limited. There was a stage line running to and from Fort Scott and Jefferson City, Missouri. The stage, an old bob-tailed "jerky", such as is now to be seen only in "Westerns," made the trip once a week unless the creeks were flooded or other circumstances made the trip

³⁸ Ibid., p. 283.

³⁹ Ibid., p. 186.

impossible. This line brought in Eastern mail. Its arrival and departure were important events.

Three times weekly there was a horseback mail from Westpoint, Montevallo and Sarcoux, Missouri, Baxter Springs, Osage Mission and Cofachique. These radiating lines indicated the importance already attached to Fort Scott as a distributing point. All freight came on ox wagons from Kansas City, Missouri, down the old military road.⁴⁰ Fort Scott also became the location for a United States Land office in 1857. During the same period, according to a humorous quotation, the third postmaster of Fort Scott was paid "2400--cents per year."⁴¹

Charles W. Goodlander arrived in Fort Scott on April 29, 1858. He came in on the first stage from Kansas City. A carpenter by trade and not finding work at the time, he took the job of carrying mail to Cofachique, which then existed near the site of Humboldt. On his trip he found the postmaster at Turkey Creek away from home. The lady of the house was washing. She gave him the key and told him to change the mail himself. He did so, and found the mail consisted of one lone copy of the New York Tribune.⁴² The Turkey Creek post office was a well-known point in the early days of the Territory. It was replaced by Uniontown in 1858.

By 1859, towns were springing up in Bourbon county. Dayton, Xenia, Uniontown, Rockford and Cato all had at least a store and a post office. In 1863, the military post at Fort Scott was connected by telegraph with Fort Leavenworth. The people then had means of communication with the outside

⁴⁰ Thomas F. Robley, History of Bourbon County, Kansas, to the Close of 1865, p. 63.

⁴¹ Ibid., p. 76.

⁴² Ibid., p. 106.

world without having to depend on the often delayed trips of the old "jerky" stage, which "the boys said was a tri-weekly, it went out one week and tried to get back the next. Stage fare was \$10 and carry a rail"⁴³ from Kansas City to Fort Scott. When the stage mired in the mud and the horses failed to pull it out, the passengers were expected "to carry a rail" and help the driver push or pry. Staging, except to local points, came to an end in 1869 when the Missouri River, Ft. Scott and Gulf Railroad was completed to Fort Scott from Kansas City.

Crawford County. For pioneers in Crawford county in the early days, Kansas City was the nearest railroad station and Fort Scott was the nearest post office.⁴⁴ The county was organized in 1867, but in 1866, Monmouth, Crawfordsville and Cato had post offices, soon followed by Girard, Hepler and Midway. Other post offices, since discontinued, were Iowa City, Hope, Strongtown, Lacey and Carbon. The latter became Litchfield. Pittsburg was first located three miles east of the present location. The official post office was belatedly established there in 1876.

Cherokee County. The first settlements in Cherokee county were near Baxter Springs and Lowell. The first post office in the county was established by a physician in Garden Township about 1858.⁴⁵ Cherokee county was formerly McGee county.

Allen County. Allen county was first settled in 1855. The first post office was established at Cofachique in the spring of 1855, near the site of

⁴³ Ibid., p. 181.

⁴⁴ A Twentieth Century History and Biographical Record of Crawford County, Kansas, p. 14.

⁴⁵ Nathaniel T. Allison, ed. & comp., History of Cherokee County, Kansas, and Representative Citizens, p. 38.

Humboldt. In 1857, a regular mail route was opened. Prior to that time, the mail was brought in from Fort Scott by a private carrier who was employed by local citizens.⁴⁶

The Humboldt post office was established in 1858. With it came the second mail route, Lawrence to Humboldt, Garnett, in Anderson county, Hyatt, Carlyle and Cofachique. Mail service began in July after a trail was laid out and marked from Hyatt to Carlyle.

Humboldt's mail service followed the evolutionary pattern of many early mail deliveries. For some time the first mail carrier made his weekly trips on a mule. After that the service was tri-weekly by a two-horse hack, then a "jerky" or two-horse stage, and finally an imposing Overland coach which was eventually succeeded by the railroad. Before the route was opened, the mail was brought from Fort Scott by private carriers who made weekly trips until 1865. Service gradually changed to tri-weekly and then became daily.⁴⁷

Woodson County. In Woodson county, Neosho Falls was granted a post office in 1857.⁴⁸ Mail was brought in from both Fort Scott and from Coffey county.

Neosho County. Neosho county mail was also furnished out of Fort Scott. A. T. Dickerman wrote the following account of getting mail in 1866:⁴⁹

⁴⁶ Lew W. Duncan and Charles F. Scott, ed. & comp., History of Allen and Woodson Counties, Kansas, p. 11.

⁴⁷ Ibid., p. 17

⁴⁸ Ibid., p. 610.

⁴⁹ William W. Graves, History of Neosho County, v. 1, pp. 248-250.

During the great civil war and for how much longer before I don't know, mail was brought from Ft. Scott to Osage Mission once a week. There was no other post office south of Humboldt nor southwest of Ft. Scott, and we all had to go there for our mail. When one went he brought all the mail for everyone he knew. In the spring of 1866 Carr Bridgeman and Elsbree opened up quite a store where Rexford and Elsbree had first started (Oswego) and after a while they hired a man named Shippy to go for the mail once a week. They took everyone's letters, going and coming for five cents each. But Shippy had to cross the river and sometimes it was up high and he soon gave it up. Then I took the job. They gave \$4.00 a trip from Oswego with the privilege of all I could make on the road. I made arrangements with Frank Simons of Montana, who kept a little store, to carry their mail for \$1.50 a trip, and at Trotter's Ford I got 50¢ on a trip for five persons. The mail came in from Ft. Scott on Monday night and the postmaster was Captain Gilmore. I had known him for three years. He kept a store there and Monday being mail day was a great day for trade, as everybody made a business of going to town on that day. As soon as I went in he came and shook hands with me and told me to go behind his post office desk and go to stamping letters. It all had to be done with pen and ink and that kept me busy until the mail came in. There were ten or twelve mail boys besides myself from all parts of the country, and when the mail came in there was a lot of it. The postmaster opened the sacks, and then read off the names and each mail boy took what belonged to him.... In carrying the mail, several that lived near the trail watched for me and brought letters for me to mail for them, and if I got anything for them I took it to them.

The first time I went up a lady came out of a little cabin that stood near the trail about a mile north of Montana, gave me a letter to mail and their name to inquire for. She was a little sharp-faced black-eyed woman and said her husband was sick. I saw a little child on all fours in the door. When I came back she met me at the door but there was nothing for her. The next time I went up it was the same thing over. The third trip she brought me a letter and handed me a 5¢ piece with a hole in it, and I knew she had taken it off the baby's neck and it was all she had. (Silver coin was scarce in those days.) I said "Madam, I can't take this money. It is no good. Take it back, I'll take your letter." She burst out crying and ran into the house. When I came back, I had a letter for her. She grabbed the letter, tore it open, and I saw the greenbacks in it. "Oh, it's come, it's come," and she ran into the house. In the fall of 1866, the U. S. extended the mail route from Osage Mission to Carey's Ferry on Grand River, down below where Afton now is.

The nearest railroad point to Neosho county in 1867 was Lawrence.

Freighting was done mostly from Kansas City, Missouri. It was often eight

to ten miles to the nearest post office or trading post where mail was obtained. The trading points in 1867 in Neosho county were Osage City, or Rogers Mill, situated on the river about four miles northeast of where Chanute now stands, Humboldt or Osage Mission. There were one or two stores at Erie which was than a crossroads post office. A small trading post was located at Prairie du Chain on the head of Chetopa Creek.⁵⁰ A post office was established there in 1868 which later became Thayer. These stores carried the most common of goods but they were the vital center for each community. Canville was also an early trading post but its post office was discontinued in 1872.

Mail lines in these early days were all star routes which came by hack or on horseback. Nobody read dailies but the few who were financially able subscribed to eastern newspapers; however, those were weekly or monthly issues. Freight wagons from Kansas City to Independence crossed the river at Trotter's Ford where a ferry was provided for use when the river was flooded. There was also a store at the crossing.

Jacksonville received a post office in 1867. The Humboldt-Baxter Springs stage passed that way and delivered mail there. For a time, when the town was flourishing, a special carrier made trips between Jacksonville and Osage Mission. Osage Mission, now St. Paul, had a post office located in a building called Castle Thunder where all the mail stages stopped. The various postmasters served without commissions until 1863 when the name was changed from Catholic Mission to Osage Mission.⁵¹

The Chanute post office was established in 1870 as New Chicago. Of

⁵⁰ Ibid., pp. 289-291.

⁵¹ Ibid., v. 2, p. 912.

the four towns which eventually formed Chanute, New Chicago was the only one that ever had a post office.⁵²

Labette County. Labette county was organized in 1867, but there was agitation for mail service long before that. The following account was given by an early settler:⁵³

In the fall of 1859 I got up a petition for a post office at my place and had 41 signers between Little Town, now Oswego, and Timber Hill in the Nation. I was instructed by the Department at Washington to have all the signers (be) the heads of families, either male or female. I had all but two; they were away at the time, and did not get back until the petition had gone to Washington. Counting 30 single men who had no families, I think there were about 250 when the war broke out, living on or near the river between the two points named. I was granted the post office--and it was to be called Chetopa, Dorn county--sometime in the summer of 1860, but as there was no mail route near here which could carry the mail we had to wait until 1861 for a new route to be established, which was done, and the contract for carrying the mail from Grand Falls by Quawpaw Mission, Baxter Springs and Cherokee on Cherry creek, Osage Mission, thence to Chetopa to Grand Falls, was advertised to be let in June, which was not done on account of the war breaking out that summer and the mail arrangements in the southwest abandoned.

Montgomery County. Montgomery county was created in 1867. It was previously a part of Wilson county. Independence had a weekly mail from Oswego in 1869, and in the following year the first stage coach came from Oswego. The first postmaster's salary was \$12 a year in 1870. The following account was given about the mail:⁵⁴

Mail facilities were meager during the first winter in Independence and the government did not act as promptly in establishing a post office as it has since. While the county seat was at Verdigris City, it is said that the postage on letters brought in varied from 10 to 25¢, according to the state of the weather, but at Independence, a service was arranged from Oswego, L. T. Stephenson being the first carrier, and the charge being uniformly

⁵² Ibid., p. 965.

⁵³ Nelson Case, History of Labette County, Kansas, p. 30.

⁵⁴ Lew W. Duncan, pub., History of Montgomery County, Kansas, p. 89.

10¢ straight....At first letters in and out were charged for alike, but later the only charge was for those brought in. One poor fellow thoughtlessly wrote a line to a Boston paper telling about the new El Dorado here in southern Kansas and his next mail cost him \$2. When the mail arrived, there was a roll-call of the letters and each man stood ready with his fractional currency to pay postage on his letters.

By 1871, Elk City and Cheryvale were established. Mail was brought in by rail that year when the Leavenworth, Lawrence and Galveston Railroad was built to Coffeyville.

Anderson County. In the spring of 1857, the first post office, name Walker, was established in Anderson county. A mail route was established from Osawatomie, in Miami county, via Walker and Hyatt, to Neosho City. In 1858, the post office was moved to Mt. Gilead, one mile west of Greeley. The office remained there for several years, but it was soon removed to Greeley, and the name was changed accordingly.⁵⁵

The second post office in the county was located at Cresco. It was not on a regular mail route and mail was brought from Hyatt by private conveyance after that post office was established in 1857. The Cresco post office was moved to a private home three miles north of Cresco in 1859.

In 1856, settlers came to Mineral Point, a little settlement isolated on the Pottawatomie. It was fifteen miles to the nearest house. The nearest post office or store was at the Sac and Fox Indian Agency, a distance of 18 miles, where an occasional trip was made for their mail and to learn what was going on in the outside world. Springfield had a post office in 1858, and the Elizabethtown post office was established during the following year.

In January, 1858, a mail route was established from Leavenworth to Humboldt. Service was begun on the route on April 24, following, via Prairie

⁵⁵ William A. Johnson, The History of Anderson County, Kansas, From Its First Settlement to the Fourth of July, 1876, p. 249.

City, Ohio City, Fairview, Hyatt, Carlyle and Cofachique. The route was staked out from Ohio City to Fairview the latter part of March. At the same time there was a road leading from Fairview to Hyatt, via the Adington crossing of the Pottawatomie, passing on the west side of Cedar Creek until near Hyatt, where the Cedar was crossed. A few days before the mail service began, a route was staked out from Carlyle to Hyatt. At first the mail was carried once a week on a small mule but soon it became a tri-weekly service in a two-horse hack. The carrier also acted as expressman. He seldom charged the people along his line for small packages or for other articles. He was, like many of the early carriers, an accommodating and helpful friend to the early settlers.

In 1860, the route was changed from the west side of Cedar, via Garnett. In the spring a post office was established at Garnett. The first mail received there was in May, 1860. It consisted of about 25 letters and 50 papers.⁵⁶

On March 31, 1858, the following mail routes were let in southern Kansas: from Butler, Missouri, via Moneka, Hyatt, Hampden, Burlington, Ottumwa, California, Florence, Emporia, to Council Grove, a distance of 150 miles; from Osawatomie to Walker; and from Shermansville, by Cedar Bluff, to Cofachique.

Coffey County. The mail route going west through Coffey county from Butler, Missouri, to Council Grove, also brought mail to Ottumwa and Burlington. Mail for the first post office at Le Roy, in the southern part of the county, was carried to the Sac and Fox Agency and from there by private conveyance until offices were established at both Ottumwa and Burlington.

⁵⁶ Ibid., p. 98.

In 1857, two stage lines were in use. One line ran from Ottumwa to Lawrence, in Douglas county, and another ran from Burlington to Lawrence.⁵⁷ Anyone going to these early post offices brought mail for his entire settlement. Mail was also brought into the county from "Scott Town," the name given to Fort Scott by the Indians.⁵⁸

Greenwood County. Like most of the other settlements in Kansas, the greatest worry for the early pioneers was that they could not correspond with relatives in the East and that they did not always have money for postage. Means of communication for the Greenwood county settlers were very limited. The first post office was established in Pleasant Grove township which was located on the bank of the Verdigris River about two miles northwest of Toronto, in Woodson county. Prior to that, the pioneers had to go to Kansas City or to Leavenworth for mail and provisions.⁵⁹

The nearest post office for settlers in the Fall River valley was Hampden, a small town on the east side of the Neosho River, a short distance from Burlington. The only chance to mail letters to friends in the East or to get letters from them was by the hands of those who chanced to be travelling the road to and from Kansas City or Lawrence. Messages were not numerous.

The Pleasant Grove post office was supplied with mail weekly from Le Roy, in Coffey county. In the latter part of 1858, a post office was granted at Eureka and the privilege accorded to the citizens of carrying their own mail in a government bag once a week. With only 20 miles to

⁵⁷ John Redmond, comp., First Hand Historical Episodes of Early Coffey County, p. 96.

⁵⁸ Ibid., p. 51.

⁵⁹ "Greenwood County Manuscripts," pp. 1-2, a collection in the Kansas State Historical Library.

travel to reach a post office which was furnished with weekly mail service, they felt that civilization was rapidly advancing and that there was little more to be desired in the way of mail facilities. Gradually, however, the novelty wore thin and taking turns carrying the mail in the busy new country was found to be somewhat irksome. According to a writer in 1876, "when the government carrier came along one day with the mailbag across his saddle he was hailed with little less delight than the railroad would be now."⁶⁰ This service, although an improvement, came only every second week.

The first postal service for Eureka began in 1860. The office was in a home where a box was used for the post office. The mail was brought twice weekly by stage coach or pony express from Humboldt. The postmaster served until late in 1868 without pay.⁶¹ The people of Shell Rock township had their first mail carried on horseback from Emporia to Verdigris Falls once a week via Elmedaro in 1860.

WESTWARD ON THE FORT LEAVENWORTH-FORT RILEY MILITARY ROAD

In 1853, the Government established the military post at Fort Riley and opened a military road from Fort Leavenworth to the new post, a distance of 136 miles. The settlers living in Leavenworth, Jefferson, Shawnee, Jackson, Pottawatomie, Riley and Geary counties were provided with a new line of communication by the fort to fort trail.

The post road was declared a territorial road in 1856. New settlements and post offices were founded along the route by those who had access to

⁶⁰ "Greenwood County Clippings," v. 1, p. 8, a file in the Kansas State Historical Library.

⁶¹ *Ibid.*, p. 117.

the new "highway to the west." Mail service was also established farther west into Dickinson and Saline counties. From Salina, routes ran both north and south to serve outlying settlements in Ottawa, McPherson, Harvey, Sedgwick and even Sumner and Cowley counties. A typical pattern of pioneer mail development followed.

Leavenworth County. The city of Leavenworth was founded near the military post. The first white settlers were post employees. The town was originally called Leavenworth City and the first post office was located in a general store in 1854. The postmaster served without pay until he was officially appointed in 1854. Mail was brought down from near-by Fort Leavenworth by private conveyance.⁶²

In 1857, the following routes were running out of the town of Leavenworth: Leavenworth to Westport, Missouri, a tri-weekly line of hacks; Leavenworth to Weston, Missouri, daily river service; Leavenworth to Lecompton, daily coaches and tri-weekly mail service; Leavenworth to Fort Riley, a weekly line of hacks with mail service, passing through Salt Creek, Easton, Hartville, Ozawie, Indianola, Silver Lake, Louisville, Manhattan and Ogden; and Leavenworth to Atchison, via Kickapoo, with a weekly line of hacks carrying mail.

There were two express lines running regularly to Leavenworth from St. Louis, both of which were well-known for their responsibility and promptness. Each of the companies had an office at Leavenworth, one of which ran a line of express wagons to Jefferson City, Missouri, to connect with the Pacific Railroad at times when river navigation was closed.⁶³

⁶² H. Miles Moore, Early History of Leavenworth, City and County, 1854-1954, p. 144.

⁶³ Elvid Hunt, History of Fort Leavenworth, 1827-1927, p. 95.

In January of 1859, the telegraph was extended from St. Louis to Leavenworth, and during that spring, Jones, Russell and Company started their Pike's Peak express from that city, carrying mail daily across Kansas to Salt Lake City. Russell, Majors and Waddell soon took over the coaching business. The terminal was later changed from Leavenworth to St. Joseph, Missouri. In 1862, Ben Holladay bought the coach lines and secured the Government mail contracts. His business was transferred to Wells, Fargo in 1866.

Kickapoo City, located above Leavenworth, flourished as a business rival to Leavenworth between 1854 and 1856. It was quite a distribution point for the postal service. A post office was located there in 1855.⁶⁴ Easton received a post office the same year.

Shawnee County. The first white settlers came into Shawnee county in 1854. Tecumseh, four miles east of Topeka, was founded several months before Topeka and had a post office in 1855. There was a ferry across the Kansas River at Tecumseh which was a principal crossing on the road from Leavenworth to the Sac and Fox Agency and to other southern Indian agencies. Two mail routes were established in 1855, one to the Sac and Fox Agency and the other to Uniontown and Wabaunsee.⁶⁵ Uniontown was a trading post on the old California Trail as early as 1848 but it was abandoned in 1855.⁶⁶

The first Topeka post office was established in 1855, the year after the founding of the city. A log cabin housed the office. The postmaster

⁶⁴ Kansas Historical Quarterly, May, 1933, p. 25.

⁶⁵ "Shawnee County Clippings," v. 28, p. 156, a file in the Kansas State Historical Library.

⁶⁶ James L. King, ed. & comp., History of Shawnee County, Kansas, p. 45.

received about \$2 per month for his first services.

After the Kansas-Nebraska Act of 1854 opened the territory for settlement, towns began springing up so fast that the Post Office Department could not keep up with them. There were many bitter complaints to the authorities in Washington about the poor mail service in the new territory. It was pointed out that it required more time to deliver a letter from one point in Kansas to another than it did to deliver a letter from Europe.

Mail was brought to Topeka by ox teams pulling freight wagons in the early days. The service was very irregular prior to the coming of the stage lines and the railroads. The freighters had no regular schedule. The service depended upon the merchants' needs for supplies.

In the fall of 1855, a regular weekly service was established by four-horse coaches between Kansas City and Fort Riley. Since they crossed the Kansas River at Topeka, they were able to furnish regular service to that city.⁶⁷ Richland, in the southeastern part of Shawnee county, had a post office in 1856. The majority of the other main county post offices were established as the railroads came. The Union Pacific Railroad, Eastern Division, reached Topeka on January 1, 1866, bringing with it mail service which was no longer dependent upon delays due to inclement weather and impassable roads that the stages had encountered.

Jefferson County. The first mail route across Jefferson county was also on the military road from Fort Leavenworth to Fort Riley. The earliest settlements in the county began along that road. Ozawie had the first

⁶⁷ Topeka Capital, March 6, 1955.

county post office in 1855.⁶⁸ The fort to fort road passed through Winchester, Hickory Point and crossed the Delaware River at Ozawkie. It left the county just west of Meriden at what was then called Mt. Florence.⁶⁹ These places were all trading points. The people obtained their major supplies from Leavenworth and Weston, Missouri, hauling them in by wagon.

The Valley Falls post office was established in 1855 and was first known as Grasshopper Falls. In 1858, the Kaw City post office, now the Grantville vicinity, was established. It was not on the post road but was supplied by special service from the Tecumseh office, in Shawnee county. Under the special mail regulations, the Kaw City postmaster received no pay for his services. The monthly proceeds of the office, which amounted to about twenty-five cents, were paid to the mail carrier as full compensation for carrying the mail to and from Tecumseh.⁷⁰

Also, in 1858, a post office was established at Winchester. A mail route was established from Leavenworth to Topeka which provided daily mail each way. Winchester was the half-way point.⁷¹

Jackson County. The settlers of Jackson county who came in 1855, got their mail from Indianola, Ozawkie or Grasshopper Falls, in Jefferson county.⁷² Jackson county was organized in 1857 with a reported population of 885. A post office, named Smithland, was located on a ranch in 1857. That office was later changed to Soldier.

Around 1863, people in the Circleville area were compelled to travel

⁶⁸ "Jefferson County Clippings," v. 2, p. 87, a file in the Kansas State Historical Library.

⁶⁹ Ibid., p. 109.

⁷⁰ Ibid., v. 1, pp. 77-8.

⁷¹ Ibid., pp. 148-9.

⁷² Elizabeth N. Barr, pub., Business Directory and History of Jackson County, p. 31.

to Jefferson county for their mail. Later a post office was established at Holton and the Circleville people hired a man to bring the mail from there three times weekly. The Circleville post office was granted a short time later.⁷³

Pottawatomie County. The first settlers in Pottawatomie county were the Jesuit Fathers who came to St. Marys in 1848; however, Louisville was founded in 1853 and became the most important early town in the county. Louisville, first known as Rock Creek Falls, became a post office in 1856. Prior to that date, Fort Leavenworth was the nearest post office for the Rock Creek valley settlers. Louisville, named after the famous Pottawatomie Indian chief, Louis Vieux, was located on the old military road.⁷⁴

The St. Marys post office was originally established as St. Marys Mission in 1855. It served various remote post offices before the early 1860's. St. George was located two miles south of the military road but mail was supplied from Deratus Torrey's station until the bridge was built over the Blue River at Manhattan in 1861. After that time the Government ran a stage through St. George which became a mail distribution point for a large territory. The stage ran day and night between Forts Leavenworth and Riley, the drivers changing horses at regular depots. They covered about ten miles an hour. There was always a crowd of people to meet the stage at St. George to pick up their mail and what news they could get from the passengers.⁷⁵

⁷³ Ibid., p. 78.

⁷⁴ J. E. Biehler, One Hundred Years in Rock Creek Valley, p. 36.

⁷⁵ "Pottawatomie County Clippings," v. 2, p. 134, a file in the Kansas State Historical Library.

Westmoreland was granted a post office in 1858. Mail deliveries were made weekly from Louisville. There was also a post office at Mariadahl called Timber City.⁷⁶

Juniata was a Government crossing at the Blue River on the military road in 1852. It was first known as Dyers Town, and according to the records, the name was changed to Tauromee in 1856 and moved to the west side of the river. There were about 50 families at one time at Juniata but the settlement was apparently dwindling when the Tauromee post office was abolished in 1858.⁷⁷

In 1853, Juniata had a ferry, a hotel, a blacksmith shop, a post office and a store. The post office was made official in 1856. A trip was made to Leavenworth every two weeks to bring back mail for the Juniata and Shannon post offices. The latter was established on Wildcat Creek, in Riley county, in 1855 and was abolished in 1858. The mail was brought in by government ambulance drawn by four mules once in every week or two in 1855. The cost to send a letter was nineteen cents and five cents for a newspaper.⁷⁸

Riley County. Ashland, now the Ashland Bottoms community in Riley county, had a post office in 1855, but it was discontinued in 1868. The Zeandale post office was housed in the Pillsbury cabin in 1858. Manhattan, also located on the post road, had a post office in 1856, and was served

⁷⁶ Ibid., p. 180.

⁷⁷ James C. Carey, "Juniata: Gateway to Mid-Kansas", Kansas Historical Quarterly, v. 21, p. 94.

Woodbury F. Pride, The History of Fort Riley, pp. 71-72.

⁷⁸ Carolyn Jones, The First One Hundred Years; A History of the City of Manhattan, Kansas, 1855-1955, n. pp.

by the mail route from Fort Leavenworth to Fort Riley and which ran to Kansas Falls, six miles west of Junction City.

By 1862, mail was carried from Manhattan up the Republican River to Clyde, in Cloud county. The carrier completed the 110-mile round trip each week. At first he carried the mail on horseback but during the second year he used a buckboard. Although there were many bands of Indians, he was never molested. He frequently carried money between banks and post offices.⁷⁹ Republic, Washington and Clay counties also received mail by private carriers from the Manhattan post office. The railroad reached Manhattan in 1866.

Fort Riley. The first post office at Fort Riley was established by a sutler in 1853.⁸⁰ Pawnee, in Riley county, for a brief time, was the first territorial capital of Kansas. The post office was moved from there to Fort Riley in December, 1855. Fort Riley mail came from Fort Leavenworth.

Geary County. The Junction City post office was established on June 30, 1858 in what was then called Davis county. The postmaster received \$11.30 for his duties performed in five months. No proceeds went to the Government.⁸¹ When the Junction City post office was established, the post office at Kansas Falls was discontinued. Mail left Fort Leavenworth early in the morning and arrived at Kansas Falls in the evening of the third day during the early period.

⁷⁹ "Morris County Clippings," p. 224, a file in the Kansas State Historical Library.

⁸⁰ Pride, *op. cit.*, p. 126.

⁸¹ "Geary County Clippings," v. 1, p. 25, a file in the Kansas State Historical Library.

In April, 1861, a contract was let for carrying the mail from Junction City to Salina. The first stage left on August 4, 1862. This was quite an event because it made a through stage route from Leavenworth to Fort Larned, via Topeka, Manhattan, Fort Riley, Junction City, Abilene and Salina. This line was operated by the Kansas Stage Company. The fare from Leavenworth to Junction City was about \$10. At this time Abilene consisted of a house, a small store and a blacksmith shop. Salina was the settlement farthest west in Kansas.⁸² During the quarter ending June 30, 1866, it was reported that 20,000 letters had been mailed from the Junction City post office and 15,000 were received.⁸³

The years from 1866 to 1870 marked the beginning of a new era in transportation and communication for this section of the country. Existing stage lines were improved and new ones started. The first through mail for Santa Fe over the Smoky Hill route, left Junction City on July 2, 1866. In 1867, a tri-weekly line of mail coaches was established to Santa Fe, a 14-day trip according to the time card. The most important event for local mail distribution, however, was the coming of the railroad which reached Junction City on November 10, 1866.⁸⁴

Dickinson County. The first Dickinson county post office was called Smoky Hill. It was established in the spring of 1860. Dickinson county was detached from Davis county during that same year. Prior to that date, Kansas Falls, four miles east of Chapman, was the only place where mail could be obtained. Smoky Hill mail was brought once a week from Junction

⁸² Pride, op. cit., p. 126.

⁸³ "Geary County Clippings," v. 1, p. 25, a file in the Kansas State Historical Library.

⁸⁴ Pride, op. cit., p. 131.

City. The carrier was paid according to the amount of stamps cancelled. His services brought him sixty cents during the first six months he carried the mail.⁸⁵

Post offices in Dickinson county were well-scattered. Junction City supplied mail for the various offices. Mail was distributed out of Abilene after the Kansas Pacific reached there in March, 1867. In 1871, on July 16, the Abilene postmaster advertised 800 uncalled-for letters.⁸⁶

Saline County. Salina was located on the old Smoky Hill route. The first settlers arrived in 1857 and by 1859, there was regular stage service from Junction City.⁸⁷ In 1862, the Kansas Stage Company line ran through Salina on its route to Santa Fe. The Kansas Pacific reached Salina in April, 1867, and Salina became a main distribution point for mail. Mail was carried north out of Salina to Lincoln by teams and spring wagons over a road that was merely a trail by carriers who seldom failed to make the trip. They also carried express and other small packages.⁸⁸

McPherson County. Salina was also a mail distribution point for McPherson county before, and even after, post offices were established in that county. The Lindsborg post office was not granted until 1869. Prior to that date, Salina was the nearest postal station.⁸⁹ Mail for isolated

⁸⁵ "Dickinson County Historical Sketches," p. 104, a folder in the Kansas State Historical Library.

⁸⁶ "Dickinson County Clippings," p. 20, a file in the Kansas State Historical Library.

⁸⁷ "Saline County Clippings," v. 2, p. 192, a file in the Kansas State Historical Library.

⁸⁸ "Ottawa County Clippings," v. 1, p. 107, a file in the Kansas State Historical Library.

⁸⁹ Emory K. Lindquist, Smoky Valley People, a History of Lindsborg, Kansas, p. 40.

settlements was sometimes obtained from Abilene. There were no names for early McPherson county localities. Only the creeks and rivers were named.⁹⁰ Settlement was much later in that county than in those counties which lay along the railroad.

As late as 1871, settlers still relied upon passing travellers to carry local mail; however, in 1872, a mail route was established between Newton, in Harvey county, and Salina which served McPherson county. The New Gottland post office was established and the mail coach, a spring wagon or a sled, went by there every day on its way to and from Salina. New Gottland was on the Wichita Road, a pioneer trail going north through Salina and south to Wichita. The post office was kept in the postmaster's home for a period of five years. His pay was one-half the money he received for selling stamps. A three-cent stamp would send a letter in this country at that time. A letter sent to Sweden cost the sender twenty-five cents, but a letter received from Sweden cost fifty cents if it had not been pre-paid.⁹¹

The Empire post office was set up in a sod house and the mail was obtained from Roxbury by a carrier who walked that distance. Later, a mail route was established through Roxbury, Empire and Christian.⁹² Empire, which was on the old Santa Fe Trail, was moved to Galva after the Santa Fe put rails down some distance north. Christian, once a country village and post office, was moved to present Moundridge when it was by-passed by the Missouri Pacific Railroad.

⁹⁰ Edna Nyquist, Pioneer Life and Lore of McPherson County, Kansas, p. 136.

⁹¹ Ibid., p. 70.

⁹² Ibid., p. 126.

News of the outside world reached Hutchinson and Reno county settlers through weekly papers. Sometimes they were three weeks old and were almost worn out before they got around to the last ones in the neighborhood.⁹³ Pioneers came into Harvey county in 1869, but there were few settlements until the Santa Fe reached Newton in 1871.⁹⁴ The line was extended to Wichita in 1872 and on to the western Kansas boundary.

Sedgwick County. During the summer of 1868, a post office was established at Wichita, in Sedgwick county, but no mail line was established at that time. The nearest "end of a mail route" was Towanda, in Butler county. The mail was brought over by anyone who might be available for the task.⁹⁵ The first official mail was brought to Wichita by stage on February 11, 1869, according to records in Washington. In fact, Wichita was listed in the 1872 trade journals as only a trading post with a population of about 800. A saloon originally served as the post office.⁹⁶

Wichita soon became a main distribution point for mail. A Government contract to carry mail to and from Cottonwood Falls was let in 1870. The post offices served along the route to the east were Towanda, El Dorado, Chelsea, Sycamore Springs, Matfield Green, Bazaar and Cottonwood Falls.

Sumner and Cowley Counties. Sumner county was not organized until 1871. The county communities depended upon the existing postal situation in Sedgwick county for mail. Cowley county was first settled in 1868. The Santa Fe reached Arkansas City in 1879. In these rather remote counties

⁹³ Ibid., p. 126.

⁹⁴ "Harvey County Clippings," v. 1, n. pp., a file in the Kansas State Historical Library.

⁹⁵ "Sedgwick County Clippings," v. 6, p. 177, a file in the Kansas State Historical Library.

⁹⁶ Ibid., p. 210.

the regular postal service was a product of the railroads and the star routes. Settlements were sparsely distributed prior to the organized postal service and mail was received at any distant, accessible post office.

ACROSS THE NORTHERN TIER OF COUNTIES

Early mail service for the northern tier of counties radiated westward from such main distribution points as Leavenworth, Atchison, Iowa Point and St. Joseph, Missouri, through Atchison, Doniphan, Brown, Nemaha, Marshall, Washington, Republic, Clay and Cloud counties. St. Joseph, 565 miles up the Missouri River from St. Louis, was laid out in 1843. The Hannibal and St. Joseph Railroad reached St. Joseph in 1859, providing a connecting link with the East. By 1860, St. Joseph reported a population of nearly 9,000 people.

Atchison County. The first post office in Atchison county was established at Mount Pleasant in 1855. The name was changed to Locust Grove in 1862. Locust Grove was never laid out as a town site but it was a stopping place on the old stage route to Topeka. The Mount Pleasant post office was moved there in 1862.⁹⁷

In 1855, Oena was platted on the northeast bank of Stranger Creek. It has the first post office in Center township and one of the first in Atchison county. The post office was located in a small store. The mail was carried from Atchison to Oena by stage. The post office was moved to Pardee in 1858 where the post office was opened in the first store.⁹⁸

⁹⁷ Sheffield Ingalls, History of Atchison County, Kansas, p. 118.

⁹⁸ Ibid., p. 94.

Port William, three or four miles above Iatan, Missouri, had a post office which was established in April, 1855. It was eight miles below Atchison. The post office was located in a general store. There was also a post office at Lancaster, ten miles west of Atchison.

Atchison was incorporated as a town in 1854. The first post office was opened in a small one-story stone building in March, 1855. A ferry crossed the Missouri River to reach Weston, Missouri. In 1858, the best means of communication with the outside world was by steamboat travel to St. Louis. Until 1866, Atchison was the eastern terminus of leading overland mail and freighting routes. Twenty-four miles west of Atchison, the route was intersected by the old overland mail train from St. Joseph. The military road from Fort Leavenworth to Fort Laramie was laid out in 1850 and mail was carried west from Atchison to Forts Kearney, Laramie and Bridger weekly. In 1861, a daily overland mail was established and with the exception of a few weeks in 1862, 1864 and 1865, it operated for five years.

Atchison was an important point for stage routes as early as 1859. There was a line of hacks which ran daily from Atchison to Leavenworth and another to Lawrence. Still another ran by Oskaloosa and Valley Falls across the Kansas River to Leecompton, Big Springs, Tecumseh and Topeka. Before 1859, in order to reach Lawrence from Atchison, passengers were compelled to go through Leavenworth, but in that year a line was opened through Mount Pleasant and Oskaloosa, reducing the distance to 45 miles and the fare to \$4.50.⁹⁹ There was also a line north to Doniphan, Troy, Highland and Iowa Point.

⁹⁹ Ibid., p. 167.

A line also operated through Doniphan to Geary City, Troy and St. Joseph. Another ran by way of Hiawatha to Falls City, Nebraska. The most important route, with headquarters in Atchison, was a four-mile line, the Central Overland California and Pike's Peak Express. With its speedy Concord stages it crossed the plains twice a week. This was the Holladay line.

The Kansas Stage Company operated a line to Leavenworth which made stops at Sumner and Kickapoo City. This company also operated a daily line to Junction City over the fort to fort road. The distance to Fort Riley was 120 miles and passenger fare was \$10. There was also a two-horse stage which carried mail from Atchison to Louisville, one of the most important towns in Pottawatomie county, and also a station on the route of the Leavenworth and Pike's Peak Express. The stage left Atchison every Saturday and arrived from Louisville the following Friday. The fare was \$8.¹⁰⁰

Doniphan County. The following Doniphan county post offices were granted in 1855: Doniphan, Highland, Iowa Point, Palermo, Wathena and White Cloud. The St. Joseph, Atchison and Leecompton stage passed through Elwood, in Doniphan county, and reached Wathena, Palermo, Geary City, Doniphan, Atchison, Winchester, Hickory Point and Leecompton. At Leecompton it connected with lines to Topeka, Valley Falls, Fort Riley, Lawrence and Kansas City. At St. Joseph it connected with the railroad to the east.¹⁰¹

Brown County. St. Joseph was the nearest trading point for the pioneers in Brown county in 1854. They also went there for their mail. By 1857, all eastern mail was coming to Iowa Point, in Doniphan county. A mail route from St. Joseph to Marysville, in Marshall county, had been

¹⁰⁰ Ibid.

¹⁰¹ Atchison Freedom's Champion, Feb. 12, 1859.

established, but service was not put on this route until 1858.

Out on Walnut Creek, the settlers determined to lessen the vexations of their mail trouble. They made a contract with a Hiawatha citizen to make a weekly trip to Iowa Point to bring out their mail. A list of names was furnished and an order was made on the postmaster to deliver the mail accordingly. This first mail route in Brown county was a purely private enterprise. The carrier received \$2 from the settlers for each trip he made. To that service he added a passenger, freight and express line, using only a pair of horses and a lumber wagon.

These facilities made the Walnut Creek "Maine Colony", as well as the other scattered pioneers, comparatively happy, at least as far as mail was concerned. A letter from the folks in their far eastern home, coming by Missouri River steamboat from St. Louis to Iowa Point, would be brought out by the carrier who made prompt trips.¹⁰²

The following post offices were established in Brown county in 1857. Claytonville, Mount Ray, Padonia, old Hamlin and Carson. Pony Creek, old Robinson and the Hiawatha post offices were established during the following year. Tyler and Ununda had post offices in 1864.

Nemaha County. The first settlement in Nemaha county was made in 1854. The settlers who came to Mill Creek traded at Leavenworth where they also received their mail. Later they went to St. Marys for mail. Neighbors took turns going for the mail for the whole community about once a week. The county population in 1855 was only 99, with reports of 512 in 1857, and 2,500 in 1860.

¹⁰² A. N. Ruley, A. N. Ruley's History of Brown County, p. 31.

The Central City post office was the first in the county. The city was laid out in 1855, in the vicinity of what is now St. Benedict. The post office was granted in 1859. A mail route had been established from St. Joseph to Marysville. Sabetha and Albany were the first points in eastern Nemaha county to get direct service. Seneca received mail from Central City. When Centralia was established, Seneca in turn served that post office. Granada was established in 1856 as the Pleasant Springs post office.¹⁰³

In 1858, when the post office was opened at Sabetha, it was the first time the settlers near there were able to get their mail nearer than St. Joseph, 65 miles away. During the gold rush to Colorado in 1858 and 1859, the postmaster claimed that his sales at the post office averaged \$200 a day.¹⁰⁴

Before the early 1860's, when a local post office was obtained, the people of Vienna and the surrounding country got their mail at various remote post offices, one of which was St. Marys, in Pottawatomie county. After 1856, America City settlers received their mail on a route from Atchison to Irving, in Marshall county.

Marshall County. Until the advent of the railroad, permanent post offices in Marshall county were not numerous. The Government had established a ferry in 1850 at the Big Blue Crossing at Marysville, first known as Marshall's Ferry. The ferryman, who was also the merchantman and postmaster, claimed to have the first non-military post office in Kansas,¹⁰⁵

¹⁰³ Ralph Tennial, History of Nemaha County, Kansas.

¹⁰⁴ Ibid., p. 106.

¹⁰⁵ Emma E. Forter, History of Marshall County, Kansas, p. 96.

although Grinter's Ferry is generally credited with the first such post office. At that date, Marysville was the last point on the Oregon Trail in present Kansas from where a letter could be mailed for eastern points. This privilege cost the writer one dollar in addition to the postage because the letter had to be sent by freighters to some Missouri River point for mailing.¹⁰⁶

In 1857, a dam was constructed across the Vermillion River just below the mouth of Cornododger Creek. A mill was built and the miller sold groceries and supplies. He also kept a kind of post office, called Barrett's Mill, to accommodate his neighbors. Letters were brought there for distribution and for dispatch. The carrying service was conducted by volunteers who went to the nearest post offices.

The Waterville post office, the fourth in the county, was not established until 1868. The Blue Rapids post office was granted in 1859, discontinued in 1869 and re-established in 1870. Oketa mail was carried from Marysville, the nearest post office south of Guittard Station on the east. Guittard Station, and several other Marshall county post offices, was located on the great overland trail to Oregon and California. It was originally established as a trading post on a ranch in 1857 at the Vermillion River. In March, 1861, Xavier Guittard was appointed postmaster.¹⁰⁷

Washington County. In Washington county, the first settlers came in 1856, but the county was not organized until 1860 with a population of 383 people. Washington county settlers traded at Marysville and received their

¹⁰⁶ The Washington County Register (Washington), June 24, 1932.

¹⁰⁷ Pony Express Courier (Placerville, Calif.), March, 1936, p. 3.

mail there. Settlement was not heavy until early in the 1860's. News travelled very slowly in this remote country. The people, hungry for news, begged travellers for their papers. Going to mill, market and post office was no small chore in the early days. Often the settlers travelled 20 to 40 miles to Marysville or Table Rock, Nebraska, for mail and provisions.¹⁰⁸

Republic County. The Republic county census of 1861 was reported to be five people and only 47 in 1863. The nearest post office was Manhattan, 80 miles away. About once a month some one of the settlers went there for mail and provisions for the settlements on Salt Creek. Mail was brought to a residence and distributed from there. This continued until the summer of 1863, when a mail route was extended to Fox Village, now Clifton, 20 miles distant.¹⁰⁹

In 1865, the line was extended to Elk Creek, now Clyde, in Cloud county. This extension was granted by the Government on condition the settlers pay all of the expense of carrying and handling the mails. The first postmaster at Elk Creek kept the post office in a stovepipe hat, the weekly mail never being sufficient to half-fill the hat. In 1868, the line extended to Salt Marsh, the first Republic county post office.¹¹⁰

The second post office in Republic county was located at Cuba in 1868. Previously, the nearest post office was Haddam, ten miles away in Washington county. Scandia was the third post office. It was established as New Scandia in 1869. The Belleville post office was located in a store in 1870 and was called Belleville City. Gomeria was once the name of the

¹⁰⁸ "Washington County Clippings," v. 1, p. 13, a file in the Kansas State Historical Library.

¹⁰⁹ I. O. Savage, A History of Republic County, Kansas, p. 21.

¹¹⁰ Ibid., p. 21.

Republic city post office.

Clay County. Clay county received its first settlements in 1856, but the county was not organized until 1866. In the early days, Fort Leavenworth was the market for the county. Milling was done at Council Grove. There were no roads laid out. The first mail route was established in 1862, which followed the creek valleys from Manhattan to Clifton.

To accommodate the rapidly increasing population of northern Kansas, the Government inaugurated mail service on the Central Branch, Union Pacific Railroad, which was constructed as far west as Waterville, in Marshall county. About 1866, mail was distributed from Waterville to all of the north and a goodly portion of central and western Kansas. From Waterville, north, south and west, stages and buckboards carried mail and passengers.¹¹¹

In 1868, the Junction City and Fort Kearney Railroad reached Clay Center. On the opposite side of the river, a daily stage route was established from Junction City to Concordia, in Cloud county, by the South Western Stage Company. It carried both mail and passengers. Republic City (Republic) was a relay station on the northern extension. Sometimes important letters were mailed by Clay Center people at Republic City because mails only reached Clay Center semi-weekly.¹¹²

Cloud County. The first scattered settlements in Cloud county, in 1858, received mail from a variety of post offices. In 1862, mail was carried to Clyde from Manhattan. Prior to the days of the railroad, there were post offices established in various parts of the county. In 1869, a

¹¹¹ "Clay County Clippings," v. 1, pp. 402-3, a file in the Kansas State Historical Library.

¹¹² Ibid., v. 2, p. 102.

post office was established at Glasco with a mail route that extended as far as Beloit, in Mitchell county.¹¹³ Meridith had a post office the previous year.

The stage coaches which travelled between Concordia and Waterville and which served parts of Cloud and Washington counties, connected daily with the Central Branch of the Union Pacific. A daily line to Junction City connected with the Kansas Pacific which gave the settlers more rapid transit of mails and passengers to and from the east. In the early days, it was thought best to establish a mail route with Concordia as the distributing point for the surrounding area. There was also a stage line running out of Concordia to the northwest.¹¹⁴

The mail route from Waterville to Clyde was established in 1870, running via Cook's crossing on Pete's Creek and Clifton. The mail was carried semi-weekly under a special contract. Early in 1871, the Princeville post office was established and mail was carried to and from Shirley alternately by neighbors. Later post offices located in the northern tier of counties followed the construction of railroads and the establishment of star routes from the nearest central points.

SUMMARY

Although there was no definite chronological order in the establishment of postal service in the eastern counties of Kansas, it is a recognizable fact that the beginnings of mail distribution and communication were most

¹¹³ Mrs. E. F. Hollibaugh, Biographical History of Cloud County, Kansas, p. 525.

¹¹⁴ Ibid., p. 37.

greatly influenced by the advanced settlements and the improvements made in transportation facilities through the area. Between the years 1828 and 1870, mail service progressed from the freight wagons which slowly travelled over the early trails and military roads, to the more regular overland stage coach service and eventually to the greatly improved services that came with the railroads and rural free delivery.

The role played by the pioneers themselves, the many private mail carriers and postmasters in establishing early post offices and post routes cannot be overemphasized. Until the Post Office Department began to keep pace with the growing number of Kansas post offices, the settlers were forced to set up their own communications system with the East. Their understandable struggle for regular and dependable mails was the result of their strong feeling that mail service was a necessity in their frontier existence. Although their means of travel were definitely limited and their distribution points remote, they laid the foundation for later mail service through community cooperation and the tenacious desire to send and receive communications from their relatives and friends "back home" in the East or in Europe.

It is true that many post offices followed in the wake of local government and the early established routes, but the remote homesteaders were forced to find some means to reach the main distribution points for mail and news. Under the existing circumstances, it is truly remarkable that such great accomplishments and progress were made, especially during the earlier years of the 54-year period. The fact must not be overlooked that the advancements were made only through the combined efforts of far-sighted individuals, who, with limited means, helped organize a haphazard situation into a practical system.

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THE INITIATION OF MAIL DISTRIBUTION AND COMMUNICATIONS
IN EASTERN KANSAS: 1828-1870

by

Jean DeMasters Folse

B. S., Kansas State University
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AN ABSTRACT OF A THESIS

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The purpose of this study was to discover by what means the early pioneers and settlers in Kansas exchanged letters among themselves and how they communicated with the East before the days of modern transportation facilities. It was necessary to find the need for postal service, how that need was satisfied and who was responsible for the initiation of the mail distribution and communications.

The work was limited to the counties lying east of a line drawn south from the western boundaries of Republic, Cloud, Ottawa, Saline, McPherson, Harvey, Sedgwick and Sumner counties. This was done because settlements west of that line were made much later, along with railroad construction, and because the development of postal service followed, in general, a similar pattern to that in the eastern part of the state. The period covered in the research began with the establishment of the first post office in Kansas in 1828, at Fort Leavenworth, and ended in 1870 when the railroads crossed Kansas.

To present an over-all picture of early transportation and communication facilities, records concerning the main overland routes were consulted which included the Santa Fe Trail and the military roads. County and local histories provided sources of the first methods used to communicate with Missouri River points which were the main distribution centers for mail, the first overland routes travelled and the locations of the first post offices.

Material for this problem was widely scattered. From the library of the Kansas State Historical Society, Topeka, early newspapers, diaries, clippings and manuscripts provided stories of early post offices and postmasters. Particular attention was given to reminiscences of early pioneers and settlers. The information was gathered county by county. Because there

was no definite chronological development for mail service, the material was divided geographically according to the dates of the establishment of the four main overland routes: the Santa Fe Trail, the Fort Leavenworth-Fort Scott Military Road, the Fort Leavenworth-Fort Riley Military Road, and the various routes which served the northern tier of counties.

From the Missouri River distribution points, the transportation and communication routes crossed Kansas on the overland trails. Along, or near, each route early settlements and post offices were founded. Until such time as the Government saw fit to systematically organize the postal service in Kansas, the pioneers and settlers received their mail by private carriers who were hired to make trips to the main distribution points. The mail was brought back to the various settlements and distributed from trading posts, the general stores or from private homes which served as post offices.

Agitation for regular postal service began early and as transportation facilities improved, official post offices and postal routes were established. Such points as Council Grove, Fort Scott, Lawrence, Louisville, Fort Riley, Salina, Wichita and Marysville, became inland distribution points for mail for their surrounding areas. From private carrier service the postal system progressed from the freighter and stage coach delivery to the dependable service which was established when the railroads crossed Kansas and the authorities in Washington established the star routes and rural free delivery.

The need for mail service developed from the feeling that communications to and from friends and relatives "back East" was a necessity to frontier life. Means of transportation in the early days were decidedly limited and the Missouri River points remote, but the pioneers and settlers

established their own system of communication. Until the Post Office Department began to keep pace with the growing number of Kansas post offices, unofficial offices were founded by private citizens. Through community cooperation they laid the foundation for the establishment of Government post offices and post routes. The many private carriers and early postmasters who served with little or no pay, along with the combined efforts of other far-sighted individuals, were influential in the promotion and establishment of a practical mail system which was sanctioned by the Government.